

MERCATOR:

OR,

Commerce Retrieved,

BEING

CONSIDERATIONS on the State of the *British* Trade, &c.

From Tuesday, October 6. to Thursday, October 8. 1713.

IT is unaccountable and surprizing to see how willing some People are to have the Subject of Trade made a Party Dispute: It is the more mysterious, in that those People, who do so, are the most likely to lose by it; for that they seem to oblige those Gentlemen, who were at first inclined a little to Scruple the French Trade, to let those Scruples fall for the present, and refer them to another time, that they may apply themselves immediately to prevent the imminent Danger, that threatens them from those, who would put all Things into present Confusion, and overturn them as a Party.

It is not to be wonder'd, that when Men have such Views, and that the Subject of Trade is only a Gap or Breach, which they would make to let in the Inundation of Parties upon the Administration, that they should be less careful in their Arguments upon the Trade, than they are in other Cases; seeing it seems to be not so much the proving this or that Argument, and supporting what they say with Reason and good Evidence, as the raising a Dust, speaking Big, enumerating Figures and great Sums, to make what is not, look as if it were; that the People being amused and terrified with strange Things, may be drawn in to assist in the Clamours and Tumults they design them for; and may carry on thereby the main Design, which is quite of another Nature.

This is now so plain, that nothing is more frequent than to hear Gentlemen express themselves thus: "I was drawn into a dislike of the Treaty of Commerce, because they represented it to me as destructive to the Manufactures; but I find now it was only a false Attack managed to divert and turn our Eyes from the Danger, which was preparing of another kind, therefore let the Trade be what it will, that may be examined into hereafter; but the present Business is, we are to be Attack'd under this pretence by other Hands, and with another Design, and this must be Defended first."

Were not this the Case, what occasion could there be for publishing such Absurdities, and backing them again with so much Clamour and want of Temper?

The *MERCATOR* desires to have no concern in any of the Party-Disputes, but keeps to the Thing proposed: The Trade to France never was as it has been represented, that has been demonstrated; and it never can be, what it has been before, that has also been proved, as far as a Thing, which is yet to come, admits of a proof.

As the large Accounts given of the Imports, which we are to expect from France, have been proved to be very improbable, so the *MERCATOR* cannot but think it very strange to find the same People, who insist upon our Importing a greater Quantity than ever of French Goods, Wines and Brandy in particular, insist at the same time upon our giving a greater Price for them also, than ever was given before; and yet they know, that the Duties here are greater, than they ever were before.

This is such an Absurdity in Trade, as was never heard of before, that whereas it was always allowed by all People that ever knew Trade, that the Dearthness of every Thing shortens the Demand for it; and these very People Argue the same thing on another Head, as shall be shewn presently; yet the Wine and Brandy only, the Dearer it is, the more shall be brought in; and tho' the Price shall be three times what used to be given for it, and the Custom three times what used to be paid for it, yet the Quantity shall be greater, than ever it was before.

If this be a just way of Arguing, then every thing, which these People say, must prevail against every one that Opposes them.

And here the *MERCATOR* desires all the Gentlemen, who read such Things as these, only to observe, how just these People are in all their Arguments, that they will allow, that the high Duties in France laid upon our Manufactures, shall lessen our Importation of those Manufactures into France; but high Duties here must not be allow'd at all to lessen the Import of French Goods here, but as much Wine must be Imported from France now, when it shall, as they say, cost 25 l. per Ton in France, as when it cost but 8 l. and when it pays 27 l. per Ton Custom, as when it paid but 7 l. 10 s.

This is the Reason, why the *MERCATOR* says, the View of these Men lies another way; they could never abandon their Reason so far as to Argue thus, if they Valued the Thing it self; but the End is Answered in raising a popular Clamour against the Publick; and whether it were this, or any thing else, it would have been the same thing.

Let this Argument be also turned another way, and it will appear to be directly against them, in a Case of which they make a very great Noise, (viz.) The Trade to Portugal; for while they, on the one Hand, insist upon the French Wine bearing a great Price in France, for the time to come, and costing us 25 l. per Ton the first Penny, they unwarily, and against their own Design,



Design, help the *MERCATOR* out at a dead Lift in that weighty Article of the Portugal Trade, and of the French Commerce destroying our Trade to Portugal, which will be, as they say, by putting the French Wines upon equal Duties, and thereby at an equal Price with the Portugal Wines; altho' it was not the Ruin of the PORTUGAL Trade before, when the Portugal Wines paid 9 l. per Ton more than the French.

Now the People, who laid great stress upon this Argument were so modest, that they told us often, if the French Wines had but paid 5 l. per Ton Custom more than the Portuguese, so that they might have been but a little dearer at Market, than the Portuguese Wines, they would have been content; but being equal NOW, the French Wines will run down the whole Trade.

The *MERCATOR* was, as they believed, over-press'd with this Clamour, because the Noise was so loud he could not be heard; when he told them, that the Portuguese always preserved their Trade before the War, and yet paid above double to the French, and that by this Treaty they were 9 l. per Ton upon better Terms, than they were before the War: this they regarded not.

But now they have brought the *MERCATOR* entirely out of this Difficulty by advancing the Cost of the French Wines from about 7 or 8 l. a Ton, which was the most that was formerly paid in France, to 25 l. per Ton, which they seem resolv'd, we shall all pay for those Wines for the future.

What though it is a little begging the Question, to affirm, they shall never come to be bought as cheap in France, as they were formerly; the *MERCATOR* resolves to find no fault with that low Step, seeing it is so much to his Advantage.

For now the Case is plain, as that 2 and 2 makes 4, that the Portuguese Trade will always have the Preference in England; for the Wines in Portugal will always be to be bought for about 4, or 5, or 6 l. a Pipe at most, and in time of Peace cheaper, which one with another may be from 8 to 12 l. per Ton, or at a Medium of about 10 l. per Ton; and the French being always to cost 25 l. per Ton, there is 15 l. per Ton odds in the Price, which is the same thing as 14 l. per Ton difference in the Duties, there being not above 20 s. per Ton difference in the Freight; for 2 l. per Ton was the usual Freight from Oporto in time of Peace, and very seldom less than 20 s. per Ton from France, but often more.

Thus they have establish'd the French Wines at 15 l. per Ton higher Price than the Portuguese; and so the formidable Monarch of our Trade, the King of P——, need not break the Peace with us, or we be frighted, lest he should forbid all our Manufacture, and to our no small Terror and Amusement, declare War with us for not standing to a Treaty, which was even supposed not to last, when it was made, and the Terms of breaking which were agreed and express'd in the Treaty it self, (viz.) That it should be no other Breach of the antient Amity of the Crowns than this, that it should be lawful to his Portuguese Majesty to do as he did before, *to wit*, Prohibit our WOOLLEN CLOTHS and the rest of the British Manufacture, which he had Prohibited before, *which was just none at all*.

Now these Men have found out an Expedient, that the French Trade may be opened, the Wines come in, and yet the Inequality, which was insisted on by the Portuguese in that Treaty be made good; for, if the Eng-

lish Resolve, they will give 15 l. per Ton more in the Price of French Wines, than they give for the Portuguese Wine, it is the same thing in effect, as if they paid 15 l. per Ton Duty for them more than the Portuguese: And so the Felonious Treaty may pass, as it really ought to have done, (viz.) for nothing at all.

Thus there is no Damage done to the Portugal Trade, no Breach of the Treaty, the Difference, which the King of Portugal demanded, is maintained, and much more; and yet 18,000 Ton of French Wine shall be Imported yearly into Britain, the Custom of which pays to the Queen 486,000 l. a Year; a Sum not this Nation, or any Nation in Europe, ever paid for the Importation of one Article of that kind, or ever will do.

Seeing then that the Portugal Affair is made so easy by this new Device, the *MERCATOR* is the willingest to acquiesce, that all the Merchants of the Party shall Trade upon that foot, and give 25 l. per Ton in France for their Wines, if they please: The *MERCATOR* has but one Favour to beg, which if they will grant him, he will soon be as Rich, as the Prince of ———, and that is, that he may be their Factor in France, and furnish them with all their Wines at that Price; though if he should, he is afraid one of these two things must necessarily happen, (viz.) Either that the Quantity they send for at that Price will be very small, or that they will not be long able to pay for them.

And as their Vouchers assert first that the quantity Imported shall be 18,000 Ton per Ann. and the Price be 25 l. per Ton abroad, to which must be added 27 l. per Ton Custom at home, while the Portugal Wines will be brought in at 40 l. per Ton; it is desired they will tell us, which of the two will be the common Draught-Wine in England, the dearest or the cheapest; and if the French are not the common Draught, how they will find Customers for 18,000 Ton of French Wine in Britain.

These material Difficulties no question they know very well how to solve; and when they shall think fit to speak again upon the Subject of the French Trade, we shall certainly have a full Eclaircissement or Discovery of the Manner, how all these things can consist with one another: till which time our Impatience is not great, since not all the furious People, who now torture the World with their Raillery and Clamour, will ever be able to make the People believe, that the French Trade shall pay the prodigious Sum of 1,173,125 l. a Year Custom.

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